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**Committees:** Labor, Commerce, Research & Development, ranking Republican;  
Health & Long-Term Care; Ways & Means; Rules

## September 20, 2005

Greetings! I hope you've had a great summer. My summer has been busy yet wonderful, especially the past several weeks. Much of my time has been devoted to meetings and other events related to my job as your state senator, but I've also had lots of time to see family and friends, as well as notice the hints in the weather that fall is approaching. In fact, September is one of my favorite months with pear and apple harvest in full swing throughout Central Washington.

**NCSL Meeting a big success:** Last month, I participated in the National Conference of State Legislatures' Annual Meeting in Seattle August 16-20. As one of the four host legislators from Washington for the NCSL Annual Meeting, I was involved with much of the planning for this event.

More than 1,300 legislators from all 50 states, plus Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands, were among the 7,400 people expected to attend the Seattle conference. Other attendees included legislative staff, private sector representatives, media representatives, and families.

NCSL is a bipartisan organization that serves the legislators and staffs of the nation's 50 states, its commonwealths and territories. NCSL provides research, technical assistance and opportunities for policymakers to exchange ideas on the most pressing state issues. NCSL was founded to improve the quality and effectiveness of state legislatures; to promote policy innovation and communication among state legislatures; and to ensure state legislatures have a strong, cohesive voice in the federal system.

I took part in several health care meetings during the Annual Meeting. I moderated a panel discussion during an Aug. 18 work session entitled "Achieving Access to Prescription Drugs: Changing Roles for the States." The panel discussion focused on the federal Medicare prescription benefit and how it will affect all of the states. More than 35 states have their own prescription drug benefit programs. For these states, the new federal Medicare prescription benefit means major adjustments in who is served and who pays. The panel discussion allowed experts in this field to explain innovative ideas and the financial realities of this issue. If you or a family member are eligible for Medicare, specific questions can be directed to a SHIBA HelpLine volunteer by calling the OIC Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-562-6900.

While at the NCSL Annual Meeting, I also took part in the Capitolbeat annual meeting. I was one of several panelists to discuss Medicaid and related health care issues. Other panelists were Bob Crittendem, MD, MPH, chief of family medicine service at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle; Barbara Lyons, Ph.D., deputy director of the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, Kaiser Family Foundation; and Dennis Braddock, former secretary of the state Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). The panel moderator was Seattle freelance writer Mary Guiden. The purpose of this panel was to educate reporters.

**Drought update:** For most of this year, our state has faced a drought declaration due to the very low snow-pack in the Cascades last winter. The effects of the drought certainly have been felt for many orchardists and residents in the upper Wenatchee River Valley. For about a month, the Peshastin Irrigation District has had to ration water because of the drought. Several towns in the Wenatchee River Valley, including Cashmere, have been asked to conserve water due to the drought. As an orchardist, I am well aware of the water shortage. Thanks to all of you for trying to conserve water whenever possible.

**Policy Consensus Center appointment:** In addition to my normal Senate committee assignments, I serve on several non-legislative committees and panels that deal with various state policy issues. These committee memberships allow me to be a better legislator, which means I can serve our 12<sup>th</sup> District more effectively.

That's why I'm especially pleased and excited to be recently named as a member of the Policy Consensus Center advisory board.

The Policy Consensus Center is a joint venture between the University of Washington and Washington State University. The center brings together representatives from a wide network of agencies, advocacy groups, businesses, agribusiness, tribal governments, university researchers and others to help find long-term solutions to policy conflicts in Washington state.

The Policy Consensus Center is a great way to bring various parties together to solve major problems facing our state, and I'm very honored to be named to its advisory board.

The PCC advisory board held its first meeting on Sept. 13-14 in Seattle. It was very special to be part of a group that includes such luminaries as former Gov. and U.S. Sen. Dan Evans, former state Attorney General and U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton, William Gates Sr., and former U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator William D. Ruckelshaus, who chairs the advisory board. I'm one of two state legislators on the advisory board, the other being Rep. Helen Sommers, D-Seattle, and the chair of the budget-writing House Appropriations Committee. Other advisory board members from North Central Washington include Grant County Commissioner Deborah Moore and Peter Goldmark, president of Double J. Ranch, Inc. in Okanogan and a member of the WSU Board of Regents.

The PCC's policy areas range from natural resources and economic development to labor issues in the business community and elsewhere. The center's activities focus on three major areas:

- Providing an objective forum and assistance with conflict resolution or policy enhancement;
- Building capacities through assessment, training, and consulting that broaden stakeholders' perspectives, improving their abilities to work together; and
- Researching and disseminating best practices in conflict resolution and policy problem solving, and mechanisms to close the gaps between science and policy.

One of the agenda items for the board this week was "Ensuring Agricultural Land Uses and Environmental Stewardship." During this segment, we discussed identifying potential pilot projects that provide possible solutions to common conflicts concerning growth management and other environmental requirements and the impact on agricultural lands. As a lot of people living in the 12<sup>th</sup> District know, growth management laws have made it more difficult for orchardists or farmers to develop their land in other ways than for agriculture, even though they can no longer make a living by using it for agricultural purposes. I will closely monitor the board's discussion on this issue.

For more information on the Policy Consensus Center, visit its Web site at <http://depts.washington.edu/wsuuwpcc/>.

**Legislative meetings this week in Olympia:** I've been in Olympia this week for Legislative Assembly, during which the House and Senate hold committee meetings on various issues.

As always, I appreciate your comments, ideas and questions about issues. It helps me be a better legislator and helps me serve you and the district better.

Until my next e-mail update, take care!

*Linda*

**Linda Evans Parlette  
Washington State Senator  
12th Legislative District**